

Volume 11: Issue 6
January 29 - February 11, 2014

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Shelter from the Storm



Stories from the cold



- 5 Volunteers prepare to count the District's most vulnerable.
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- 11 Cynthia Mewborn responds to mayor's mandate to move homeless indoors.

COVER ART

Warming buses are part of new city plan to save homeless lives.
ILLUSTRATION ELISHA SPELLER

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OUR STORY

Street Sense began in August 2003 after Laura Thompson Osuri and Ted Henson approached the National Coalition for the Homeless on separate occasions with the idea to start a street paper in Washington, D.C.

Through the work of dedicated volunteers, Street Sense published its first issue in November 2003. In 2005, Street Sense achieved 501 (c) 3 status as a nonprofit organization, formed a board of directors and hired a full-time executive director.

Today, Street Sense is published every two weeks through the efforts of four salaried employees, more than 100 active vendors, and dozens of volunteers. Nearly 30,000 copies are in circulation each month.

How It Works

Each vendor functions as an independent contractor for Street Sense. That means he or she re-invests in the organization with every purchase.

Vendors purchase the paper for 50 cents/issue, which will then be sold to you for a suggested donation of \$2.

75%

75% supports the vendors helping them overcome homelessness and poverty.

&

25%

25% supports the production costs at Street Sense.



Street Sense publishes the newspaper.



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The remainder of your \$2 donation directly supports the vendor.

As self-employed contractors, our vendors follow a code of conduct:

1. *Street Sense* will be distributed for a voluntary donation of \$2.00. I agree not to ask for more than two dollars or solicit donations for *Street Sense* by any other means.
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10. I agree to support *Street Sense's* mission statement. In doing so I will work to support the *Street Sense* community and uphold its values of honesty, respect, support, and opportunity.



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Warmth on Wheels



PHOTO BY JANE CAVE

By Mary Otto
Editor-in-Chief

The wind is deadly. The sky is black and the temperature is plummeting toward single digits. The lighted sign on the idling Metrobus parked at the snowy curb outside the West End library reads "Out of Service," but the bus driver, Gary Thomas, bundled in a hat, coat and reflective vest, invites a weather-beaten passenger to climb aboard.

If you ask Thomas, the bus is not as much out of service as it is serving a higher purpose. It is one of the designated "warming buses" that have been deployed around the city in recent days to protect homeless people from the frigid weather.

The vehicles have been made available by the Washington Metropolitan Area

Transit Authority, working in coordination with the District's Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency. And Thomas, for one is grateful to be part of the effort to get a few fellow humans out of the cold.

"This is my brother, my sister, my father, my mother," he says, ushering another passenger through the door.

The warming bus initiative is part of a larger effort headed by Mayor Vincent Gray to get homeless people to safety during this extremely bitter season, city officials explain.

"Heavy winds and 15 degrees with the wind chill. When we hit those extreme conditions we know the vulnerability and chance of death is higher," says David Berns, who heads the city Department of Human Services.

City emergency shelters are open as usual, offering more than 1,300 beds for single men and more than 400 for single women. In addition, more than 600 homeless families are currently placed in motels and in a former hospital.

Yet there are some homeless people who avoid shelters. Some worry they will lose their belongings. Others say they fear the other occupants or the facilities themselves. Some want help but don't know where to find it or whom to trust. Last year's annual homeless count identified more than 500 individuals living in alleys, parks, under bridges and in doorways throughout the city. To some of these street dwellers, the warming buses have provided temporary, low-barrier refuge. According to Berns, on a recent night 130 people stayed on the warming buses.

Food and water are available on the buses. Portable restrooms are placed nearby. Locations are subject to change but have included Foggy Bottom, Union Station and McPherson Square.

In addition to the warming buses, several neighborhood recreation centers have been turned into emergency warming centers during recent periods of intense cold. Outreach workers have been sent outside to urge people to use these places of safety.

According to a statement from the mayor's office, police and officials from the city's Department of Behavioral Health are authorized under city law to "transport those homeless individuals with a mental illness who are not able to protect them-

selves from the extreme cold" into mental or emergency facilities for evaluation.

Not every homeless person has appreciated the efforts. James Mitchell, who camps near Dupont Circle, says he was angry when a policeman told him to get on a warming bus on one recent frigid night.

"I grew up camping. I have two sleeping bags, two blankets and tarp," says Mitchell, who resented the intrusion. "I can understand them trying to talk to someone who is really mentally ill," he adds. "I was pissed."

At the West End Library on this night, the warming bus draws praise.

"It's cozy," says a man who does not wish to give his name.

"I think it's a great idea," agrees another passenger, Bill McNeal. "I was there last night. It's nice and comfortable."

He says he enjoyed the food as well as the warmth. "We had tuna and macaroni. Then we had salami and cheese sandwiches. Then we had fruit and pastries and Welch's grape juice. It was very good."

Thomas, the driver, says the time he has spent on the bus has flown by.

"These guys have been more than appreciative," he says. "They humble me."

Yet he has been left with an unsettling sense of a larger dilemma to which he is unable to respond. Out in the dark, there are many people who will not fit on his bus. Tomorrow there may be more.

"I'm just a little guy, trying to solve a bigger problem," he says. "We've got a deep-rooted problem we need to address."

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Service Providers Recognize Importance of Client Leadership

By Angela Harvey
Volunteer

Advocates and service providers for the poor and homeless dedicated a recent weekend to wrestling with some of the thorniest questions they confront in their work.

How do you balance the need to help struggling people cope with daily crises against the need to work for long-term change in society? How do you move from offering temporary assistance to empowerment? How do you cultivate fairness within your own organization?

The answers often lie in giving a larger

role to the people you are trying to help. Allowing the poor themselves to determine the kind of support and services they need can open doors to deeper change, according to organizers of the Service to Justice conference, held in the District on Jan. 24 and 25.

The meeting drew about 250 participants representing nearly 100 different groups working to alleviate poverty in the District and beyond.

The event was planned as an opportunity for groups and advocates to discuss

ways to improve their work and to examine the impact they have on clients and in the communities they serve, with the ultimate goal being equity and inclusion. Some of the topics covered in the workshops were community organizing, team structure, self-directed care and fundraising.

"Some of us see ourselves as two different groups, the ones providing services and the ones receiving them. In this equation, the recipients are somehow seen as being less than the providers," said speaker Rob Chisom with The

People's Institute for Survival and Beyond. "We've got to change this dynamic, this illusion in society, and bring ourselves to a place where we are all equal and we all can prosper."

Bread for the City, which offers a range of services in the District including legal assistance and a food pantry, had staff members in attendance. The organization has taken steps in recent years to include its clients in the structure and decision-making process. In 2009, it formed a client advisory board that has a seat at the table during staff and board meetings.

Today, the client advisory board includes about 20 members. One mem-

ber, Denice Speed, has been on the board for two years. She said she has seen the difference the board is able to make in helping to shape and develop programs at the organization, and she tries to recruit others to join.

"It is so important for the clients to be involved in the process and running an organization and we want more people to be engaged," Speed said. "We are able to push for funding on projects that are important to us and the community as a whole."

Clients of some of service groups said they felt their voices are not heard in the decision making process, and that some providers lack the open door policies necessary for clients to become engaged. Others, such as Carlton Harris, who was formerly homeless and now volunteers in outreach work for the People For Fairness Coalition, said while some organizations will listen to grievances, that does not always translate in to action.

"Many times I felt like people were listening but they didn't hear me. I could talk about things I saw that needed improvement or make suggestions, but rarely did I see anything come from it," Harris said.

In addition to creating environments of inclusion was the idea of giving clients a chance to join an organization in a professional role by providing opportunities for career training and help with the application and hiring process.

"It's important to create leadership and development opportunities to allow clients to become members of the organization that is providing them services," said Sean Thomas-Breitfeld, with Building Movement Project. "This way, people will know and feel like they have useful skills while also being able to give back."



T. Sanders (left) and David Pirtle (right), speakers with the Faces of Homelessness Speakers' Bureau run by the National Coalition for the Homeless, shared their stories with participants at the Service to Justice Conference. Sanders said it is important for people to get involved with service organizations because individualized treatment is crucial in recovering from homelessness. Pirtle said one of the best ways homeless individuals can advocate for themselves is by getting involved in educating others. "Being a speaker has helped me learn how to recover my voice," Pirtle said, "because one of the things I lost when I was living on the streets was my voice."

PHOTOS BY ANGELA HARVEY

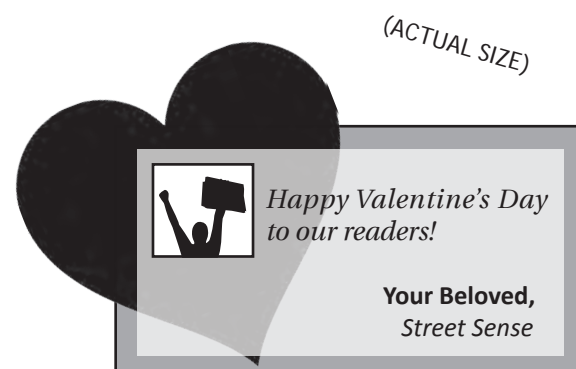
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Volunteers Count Themselves In for D.C.'s 2014 Homeless Census

By Sam Bermas-Dawes
Editorial Intern

"Hello, my name is Joanna and I was wondering if you would fill out my survey tonight."

A chorus of introductions began as nearly 50 volunteers for the annual Point-in-Time count of the homeless practiced their lines at Foundry United Methodist Church in Northwest Washington.

They were preparing for the night of Jan. 29 when, armed with clipboards and questionnaires, they are scheduled to go out and comb the city's streets, alleys and parks seeking homeless people to include in the homeless census, now in its 14th year.

Volunteers will have forms to complete for every engagement; the forms contain spaces for name, location and age, as well as questions relating to personal health, disability and employment. The chronically homeless may remember most of the questions from previous years, according to Tom Fredericksen, of the Community Partnership for the Prevention of Homelessness, which manages the District's annual count.

The count provides a "point-in-time" snapshot of the city's homeless population that helps officials plan for needs such as shelters and transitional and supportive housing as well as programs that can help address the underlying causes of homeless.

People living on the street who are willing to complete the survey will receive a 10 dollar gift card to McDonald's.

Fredericksen said that while volunteers go street by street, personnel in shelters will be passing around the survey to those inside. Such efforts are being replicated in the District's Maryland and Virginia suburbs and across the country. Results will be submitted to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, which funds homeless programs nationwide.

"HUD uses the count to monitor changes in the size of the homeless population in jurisdictions across the country, especially as it relates to key sub-populations like unaccompanied youth, veterans, and the chronically homeless," an official at Community Partnership explained in a later interview. "Locally, the information is used for those purposes as well, but also to understand the needs of the city's homeless population in order to identify any gaps in the system and plan future allocations of resources to meet those needs."

Here in the District, last year's count found a total of 6,865 homeless people, a 1.4 percent decrease from 2012. The

figure included 512 living on the street, 4,010 in emergency shelters and 2,343 in transitional programs. The numbers indicated a 3.1 percent decline in the number of homeless families living in the District from the previous year.

The count provides a "point-in-time" snapshot of the city's homeless population that helps officials plan for needs such as shelters, transitional and supportive housing as well as programs that can help address the underlying causes of homeless.

A total of 983 families were reported last year, down from 1,014 in 2012.

Region-wide, a total of 11,547 homeless men, women and children were counted.

Volunteers at the training session for the District's 2014 count were told to bring sturdy footwear, a flashlight and adequate clothing for a night forecast to reach near single-digits.

In case of bad weather, a 24-hour delay will be placed on the census.

Point In Time Individual Survey Form
Complete one sheet per engagement

Team/Neighborhood: _____
Surveyor Name: _____

First Name/Nick Name: _____ Last Name: _____

Location (Address, cross streets and/or landmark), be sure to include quadrant—NE, NW, SE, SW: _____

General Description of Person

Gender: ☐ Female ☐ Male ☐ Transgendered (Male to Female) ☐ Transgendered (Female to Male)

Age: _____ (if question is refused, please indicate with "Y" if the person appears to be under age 18.)

Have you ever served in the Armed Forces/Military? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't Know ☐ Refused

Are you currently experiencing violence? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't Know ☐ Refused

What is the primary reason that you are homeless? _____

Have you been homeless for a year or more OR have you been homeless for more than 180 days? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't Know ☐ Refused

Are you living with a medical or disabling condition? ☐ Chronic Health Condition ☐ HIV or AIDS ☐ Physical Disability ☐ Developmental Disability ☐ Mental Health Condition ☐ Other ☐ Don't Know ☐ Refused

Are you currently employed? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't Know ☐ Refused

Do you receive income? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't Know ☐ Refused

If "yes" check the box for any reported source(s):

<input type="checkbox"/> From Employment	<input type="checkbox"/> SSDI/SSI/Disability Income	<input type="checkbox"/> Food Stamps
<input type="checkbox"/> Social Security/Retirement	<input type="checkbox"/> TANF/Public Assistance	<input type="checkbox"/> Medicare/Medicaid
<input type="checkbox"/> Alimony/Child Support	<input type="checkbox"/> Veteran's Benefits	<input type="checkbox"/> TANF-funded services
<input type="checkbox"/> Unemployment	<input type="checkbox"/> General Assistance	<input type="checkbox"/> WIC
<input type="checkbox"/> Other (can include panhandling)	<input type="checkbox"/> Other benefit (cash)	<input type="checkbox"/> Other benefit (non-cash)

Where were you living prior to becoming homeless?

<input type="checkbox"/> My own housing	<input type="checkbox"/> Hospital	<input type="checkbox"/> Other
<input type="checkbox"/> My own (subsidized) housing	<input type="checkbox"/> Substance abuse treatment	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't Know
<input type="checkbox"/> With family	<input type="checkbox"/> Mental health treatment	<input type="checkbox"/> Refused
<input type="checkbox"/> With friends	<input type="checkbox"/> Foster Care/Group Home	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Incarcerated	

ILLUSTRATION BY ALISON HEASLEY

Table 2: Literally Homeless by Jurisdiction 2009-2013

Jurisdiction	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	% Change 2009 - 2013
Alexandria	360	359	416	352	275	-24%
Arlington County	511	531	461	451	479	-6%
District of Columbia	6,228	6,539	6,546	6,954	6,865	10%
Fairfax County	1,730	1,544	1,549	1,534	1,350	-22%
Frederick County	324	303	280	285	275	-15%
Loudoun County	152	157	156	164	166	9%
Montgomery County	1,194	1,064	1,132	982	1,004	-16%
Prince George's County	853	789	773	641	686	-20%
Prince William County	630	488	566	467	447	-29%
TOTAL	11,982	11,774	11,879	11,830	11,547	-4%

TABLE COURTESY OF THE METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

Winterhaven Standown: *getting homeless veterans what they need most*

By Morgan Austin
Editorial Intern



PHOTOS BY MORGAN AUSTIN

At 7 a.m., two hours before the Winterhaven Homeless Stand Down was scheduled to begin, a crowd of veterans was already waiting.

And by the time the Jan 25 event at the VA Medical Center was over, a record 712 vets had received help of all kinds, from medical and mental health care to employment support, from housing assistance to legal counseling; from hot meals to warm clothing to new boots to haircuts.

The event, now in its 20th year, is dedicated to bringing together government

agencies, local charities and businesses to provide a day of service to veterans in need.

"Seventy government agencies came together for one purpose," is the way event coordinator Sarah Cox put it. And every vet who braved the cold to attend had a story to tell.

One of them, Walter Klik, said he had struggled with substance abuse and lost touch with his family before finding himself homeless.

"Other than cold and rainy nights, I was

having a ball, or at least I thought I was," said Klik. As his addiction deepened, so did his isolation from others. Finally, he touched bottom.

"When I last overdosed, it made me ask for help," he said. Thankfully, the VA Medical Center was there for him. He credited the staff with helping him on the road to recovery. Now he sees hope in his life again.

"You have to take the good with the bad and learn how to cope with it," said Klik. "I'm in a better place; I have a

place to call home with a stove and pots and TVs... Things are better, but they aren't great."

Another veteran, James Peterson, also spoke of his journey out of addiction, thanks to a sobriety program.

"As long as I stay away from people who bring me back to where I was, I will be fine," said Peterson.

Addiction has contributed to the homelessness of many vets. Others have lost their housing after getting behind on bills due to employment or health problems.



Lafayette Cooper said his diabetes led to troubles at work. When he lost his job, he became homeless. His faith in God and the love of family members have helped sustain him through his difficulties, he said. "I go to church every Sunday and pray," said Cooper. He said he was grateful for the medical attention he received at Winterhaven.

And veteran Richard Fagus said the VA, as well as events such as Winterhaven, have served as lifelines.

"Five years after I got out the service,

I became aware I could get medical services at the VA because I was a veteran," said Fagus. "If it weren't for these services, it would be very bad."

Another attendee, Eweka Johnson, said he had traveled from Brooklyn, NY, to come to Washington, hoping to meet President Obama and speak with him about a non-profit organization he has formed to raise awareness on issues such as adolescent obesity and bullying. Johnson said he became active in the Army Reserve after losing a close friend to the terrorist

attacks on 9/11.

"If I wasn't fighting, I'd be dead already," said Johnson.

Many of the veterans said they were drawn to Winterhaven for medical help as well as the promise of new clothes and a warm meal. But the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs also strives to offer longer range assistance as well.

Currently, 1045 local veterans are housed through HUD-VASH, a supportive housing program operated by the VA and the U.S. Department of Housing and Ur-

ban Development. The VA has set a goal of ending homelessness among vets entirely. Officials say that nationwide, veteran homelessness has decreased by 24 percent since 2010, thanks to programs such as HUD-VASH.

As the hope and energy found at Winterhaven help to demonstrate, homeless vets defy stereotypes, said Cox.

"People have misconceptions of the homeless veteran and they would come here and see that it's not the case," she said.



PHOTOS BY BARRON HALL



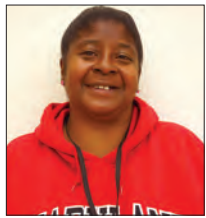
I had to ask my higher power why is it that the poor and homeless suffer with drugs and substance abuse? Why do we have to deal with all this murder and stealing, and every other type of crime in our neighborhoods? I see the tricks the rich and well-to-do people play. They start with causing our areas to have unsafe living conditions, then make laws to keep our bread winners in jail for long periods of time. They devise ways to drive us out of our homes or neighborhoods that they want to live, in like they did with the nation's capital. They raise taxes to the point where moving would cost you less money than staying put. My higher power says those people will suffer a terrible punishment for their abuse of power.

Do you not see that God has subjected to your use in all things in heaven and on Earth, and has made his bounties flow to you in exceeding measure, both seen and unseen? Yet there are those who dispute God without knowledge or guidance, and without a book to enlighten them when they are told to follow the revelation that God has sent down. They reject that path, saying they will follow the ways of their fathers, even if it means following the way of Satan and going to Hell. Whoever gives him or herself wholly to God and does the right thing has earned the right to hold God's hand, the most trustworthy hand ever, because with God rest the end and decisions. Praise God! While we still have time.



The Cold is Here

By Jacqueline Turner, Vendor



When you see people on the street, what do you think? Most people don't like to give people money. They think you will use it to get high or drunk. So they give you a quarter or dollar. Then there are people who give you food. This is good, but most people try to give you health food and when you are homeless you need the heavy food be-

cause you don't know when you are going to eat again.

The homeless need just about everything you can think of: clothes, shelter, medical and spiritual. That is what they need, not necessarily what they want. We want to feel like we are helping ourselves. To have pride in ourselves. That's why some homeless sell Street Sense; it is a job when you don't have one. A way to help yourself. So please remember we know what we need: short term things

when we are hungry or raggedy, then a goal to be self-sufficient.

Being homeless and selling Street Sense in the cold, you come to think of the cold as a large, mortal enemy. It's as if you were a cartoon and the cold is chasing you. The enemy is always close, it is around every corner. Sometimes you get brave and say I am not going to run, and you devise a plan to fight back. One plan is to drink a hot beverage and put Ma Cold down, but if you drink too much

that the heat of the inside is so comfortable that you find yourself thinking about the warmth of the inside when you are outside . . . and then fifteen becomes twenty minutes. Then you find yourself not getting that many sales in. The reason you are out in the cold in the first place is to get sales.

The homeless need just about everything you can think of: clothes, shelter, medical and spiritual.

Then you start the mental battle. You say to yourself, "I have no choice. I have to work to help myself." You go along with this for a couple of hours . . . until the cold feels relentless again. Then you go through the whole gamut of emotions: happy, sad, tired, sleepy, and all to get right back to what it is: COLD! So you start the same thing over again. Drink hot stuff. Sit inside, tell yourself you must survive. Until at the end of the day you feel like you did hard labor instead of just selling papers. In the cold, selling the paper takes your whole physical and mental energy.

Give me a job on the inside any day! Until I can do better, I'll stick with Street Sense and keep fighting Ma Cold.



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CHILDREN'S ART: MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DAY



ARTWORK FROM CHILDREN AT DC
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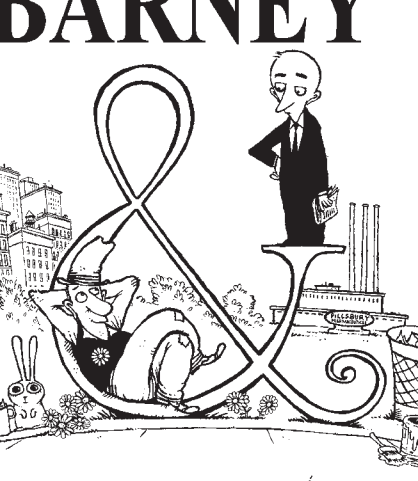
2,453 schoolage children experienced homelessness last year in D.C., about 1 in 20 children, or more than 1 child per classroom. The Homeless Children's Playtime Project visits 6 different transitional housing and emergency shelter programs to provide weekly activities, healthy snacks, and opportunities to play and learn to as many children as possible.



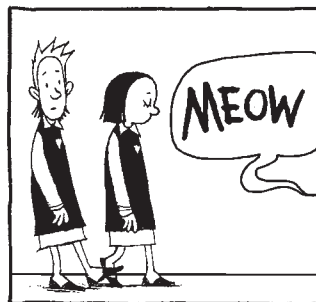
Courtesy of the Homeless Children's Playtime Project
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RIENDSHIP BETWEEN A HOMELESS MAN AND A TYCOON. IT'S ABOUT OUR MODERN, POLARIZED ECONOMY O

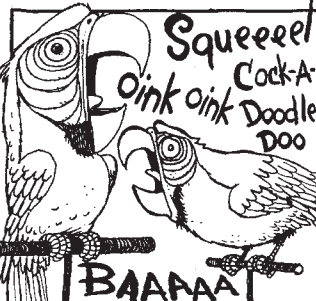
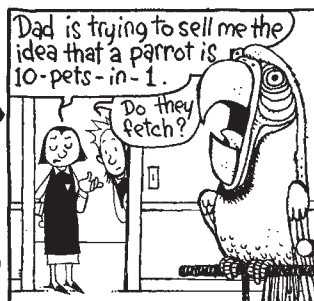
BARNEY



by Weingartens & Clark



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WINNER
 PEOPLE'S CHOICE AWARD
 BEST ACTOR (CHIWETEL EJIOFOR)

EIJOFOR
 FASSBENDER
 CUMBERBATCH
 DANO
 GLAMATTI
 NYONG'O
 PHELSON
 PITT
 WOODARD

FILM BY STEVE MCQUEEN
12 YEARS A SLAVE
 THE EXTRAORDINARY TRUE STORY
 OF SOLEMAN NORRIS

REGENCY ENTERPRISES AND RIVER ROAD ENTERTAINMENT PRESENT
 A RIVER ROAD FILM A B AND NEW REGENCY PRODUCTION IN ASSOCIATION WITH FILM4
 A FILM BY STEVE MCQUEEN "12 YEARS A SLAVE"
 HANS ZIMMER MUSIC BY JESSICA LEWIS
 EDITED BY JOHN RIDLEY
 PRODUCED BY PITT DEE GARDNER
 EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS STEVE MCQUEEN ARON MUKKAI ANTHONY K. AGAS
 PRODUCED BY JOHN RIDLEY
 WRITTEN BY STEVE MCQUEEN

RATED PG-13
 PARENTS STRONGLY CAUTIONED
 SOME MATERIAL MAY BE INAPPROPRIATE FOR CHILDREN UNDER 13

REGENCY ENTERPRISES
 RIVER ROAD ENTERTAINMENT
 FILM4

Are Holidays Helpful?

Reggie "Da' Street Reportin' Artist" Black, *Vendor*



On Jan. 20, Americans marked the Reverend. Martin Luther King, Jr. federal holiday as a national day of service. The King holiday is one of the few holidays when the homeless are thought about, besides Thanksgiving and Christmas. Yet I wonder if Dr. King would approve of the way his holiday was observed here in Washington, D.C.

This year's holiday dawned with a hypothermia alert in effect, meaning the freezing temperatures posed a risk to survival. During such times, shelter providers are required to allow shelter residents to stay indoors until the alert is called off by the District's Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency.

When the alert was suddenly canceled at 9 a.m. disgruntled, tired residents made their way outside. The shuttle bus that usually comes earlier in the morning did not appear. The alleys where we stood seemed lonely and unforgiving. One by one the residents made their way out of the area. Some walked. This reporter caught the Metro.

I found myself heading to the annual parade over in Southeast Washington. This year, hopeful candidates for the April mayoral primary were trying to grab the spotlight but they could not smooth over feelings of disrespect. Many Washingto-

nians come to the Martin Luther King parade to watch their children march, twirl batons and play instruments in the parade. Yet it was hard for me not to think of the more than one dozen neighborhood schools that were recently closed. Kaya Henderson, the D.C. schools chancellor, defended her decision to close them, saying they were underperforming. But some residents miss those schools. And what happened to those school bands, and those kids?

I headed downtown to the Martin Luther King Jr. Library.

The usual gathering place for the homeless was closed - for the holiday. Without anywhere to go, the homeless community was left to simply move from area to area, in a vain search for a place to rest. What would Dr. King have said about his day?

c=mb2: Something Different in the Streets

By Cynthia Mewborn, *Vendor*



On January 7, as the polar vortex brought frigid temperatures to Washington, Mayor Vincent Gray and the city's Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency (HSEMA) announced a plan to help ensure that all homeless street dwellers would be sheltered from the cold. The plan laid out a 24-hour open door policy in meeting their needs through overflow shelters, emergency warming centers as well as warming buses. The plan would not only be implemented for this particular event but would be activated whenever temperatures drop to dangerous levels, officials said.

In addition, representatives from the city Department of Mental Health would accompany the District mobile homeless outreach services staff to make the necessary referrals to medical or psychiatric facilities or local shelters.

There is something different in the streets of Washington, and this effort is it.

These outreach workers are scouring every part of the city, making sure that they reach all or as many individuals as they can, helping them obtain shelter, hot meals, blankets, hand warmers, care packages, and whatever other services they may need.

I am absolutely sure that some people will disagree with being given a choice between going into a shelter and being escorted to the Comprehensive Psychiatric Emergency Program. But keep in mind, when human beings are at risk of possible death due to mental health or substance use issues this mandate saves lives. Keep in mind that in past frigid weather events, street dwellers have died of hypothermia.

This winter's emergency initiative works on the premise that it is better to be safe than sorry. It also demonstrates the idea that this is a city where we not only care about our visitors but about our residents, homeless people included. Well done to D.C. Mayor Vincent Gray and HSEMA. On behalf of the street dwellers population I thank you. Bold moves for a bolder future!



Wanting a King for All the Wrong Reasons

By Jeffrey McNeil, *Vendor*



1 Samuel 8; When the people of Israel said, "Give us a king to lead us," Samuel went to the lord and prayed. The Lord told him: "Listen to what the people are

saying to you; it is not you they rejected, they have rejected me as their king. As they have done when I brought them up from out of Egypt, forsaking me and serving other gods.

The people refused to listen to Samuel, saying, "No, We want a king over us! Then we will be like all the other nations, with a king to lead us and to go out before us to fight our battles." When Samuel heard what the people wanted he repeated it before the Lord. The Lord said, "Listen to them and give them a king."

The ascendancy of Barack Obama parallels the story of King Saul. As with the Israelites, African Americans were

a despised race that was enslaved and persecuted. However, after years of mistreatment their fortunes began to improve in the 1960s, thanks to civil rights legislation. By the 1990s, African Americans were not only moving into the middle class but also advancing politically. Cities such as New York, Washington D.C. and Los Angeles had elected black mayors, and blacks were being duly represented in Congress. Dreams of a black president would have to wait for awhile, though when Bill Clinton won in 1992, he was so beloved, many only-half jokingly called him our first black president. He didn't patronize minorities but felt comfortable around them. To many African Americans, there was no better friend.

So when Hillary Clinton decided to run in 2007, it was unthinkable that the black community wouldn't support her. However, the press started romancing someone new. As with King Saul, Barack Obama was an impressive figure -- handsome, charismatic, and articulate. Although he never said anything of substance, his voice

was magical. While his words of hope and change left the press starstruck, what kept them in a trance was his complexion.

The public fell in love with a man who was born to a white mother and a father whose lineage came from African royalty, and no one fell harder in love with Barack Obama than the black community. There were naysayers such as Tavis Smiley and Cornel West that claimed many wanted a king for the wrong reasons when a queen was more qualified for the throne. However, civil rights leaders considered them crackpots. They convinced many that if a king looked like them he was going to prefer them over others. So many considered color more important than competency.

I was one of the few that didn't bite into the Obama apple. I endured threats and hate mail for being critical of him. Yet when he won the nomination, I campaigned for him. Although I was cynical about America electing a black president, when he won I too was elated.

In his victory I believed anything was possible, because I never envisioned that

in my lifetime America would elect a black president. But I was also happy for white people because they no longer had to carry the burden of the past.

As far as I was concerned, it was an out-of-Egypt moment, a passing of the torch. No more blaming or excuses; it was time to give white people a full pardon of past wrongs. It was the dawning of a post-racial society.

What a difference six years makes. Today, you hear grumblings in barber shops, cafes and on Facebook about "what Obama hasn't done for us." Sometimes my heart aches for the people I love so dearly. I see them as being in the clutches of black pastors, politicians and other civil rights hucksters. These leaders managed to convince their constituents that the only reason they should have voted for Obama was because he was going to give them preferential treatment.

Looking back, did the modern day Israelites want a king for the wrong reasons?

A Homeless *Street Sense* Vendor's Housing Dilemma

By Carlton Johnson, Vendor



Finding an apartment is one thing; resolving all the ifs and buts is another.

Recently, I found an apartment where the landlord is willing to work with me.

The rent is \$900 a month. BUT here's the thing: I have to raise the first month's rent by Feb. 1.

I already obtained \$900 through Friendship Place for the security deposit. So now, unless I sell 600 papers at \$2 a piece for a profit of \$900, I may have to forfeit this housing opportunity.

Then there's the issue of my stuff, which has been at my father's home, BUT he is about to move, so I have to find storage immediately for my possessions.

Since August I've been staying at hotels, which I pay for by working part time and selling *Street Sense*. I've been paying \$55 a night (sometimes even treating myself to the Comfort Inn, like the Ritz for me); I would save hundreds of dollars each month by renting my own apartment.

Luckily I found a landlord willing to work with me. I'm a communications technician by trade, BUT right now the project I was working on has come to a stop; work is at a standstill. Even when I was working, I had to go to Sterling, Va., at a cost of \$15 round trip for trains and buses.

I was offered a place to stay at a church, BUT you have to be there at 7 p.m., and that is the peak time for my sales. Given my entrepreneurial spirit, I set up a Square account, which would allow me to take credit cards for *Street Sense*. BUT to use Square I would need technology that my outdated phone lacks.

I write poetry and have thought about selling it. BUT, as a *Street Sense* vendor, my contract doesn't allow that. In addition, the cost of publishing a bound book using the machine at Martin Luther King Library is prohibitive. Online publishing is also expensive.

I could do this, BUT then there's that problem. I could do that, BUT then there's this problem. There is always a BUT. It all adds up to a homeless *Street Sense* vendor's dilemma on housing.



ILLUSTRATION BY DAVID SEROTA

MY KATRINA: Part 3

By Gerald Anderson, Vendor

Previously: The water level continued to rise. More and more folks were packing up and heading to the Superdome, while my six buddies and I stood our ground on a fourth-floor balcony at the projects. Even though I knew the water would be up to my nose, three friends and I headed out. We half swam, half waded to the rich folks' side of town where we found a boat in the driveway of a vacated home. We climbed into it and—using plywood sticks we found in the garage—paddled back toward the projects...

On our way back to the projects, we saw a guy standing on the porch of a house. He called out, "Man, I need help."

I asked my friend, "Who is he?"

"You don't know him," my friend said. "He moved here while you were in jail."

He had previously lived in the crime-ridden Calliope Projects, so everyone called him Calio.

My buddy pointed to me and told Calio, "He's the dude I told you about who was locked up."

I asked Calio, "What you need help with?"

He said, "Keisha in the house. She refused to go to the Superdome without me and I didn't want to leave."

"So what?" I said, and he told me, "She my baby's mama and she real pregnant. She in pain and can't get out of the house. We gotta find a way to get her out."



PHOTO BY BRETT MOHAR

Keisha was in their split-level home a few doors over; Calio had come to this porch to seek help, because it was on higher ground.

Calio climbed into our boat and we paddled to the house to help Keisha. We pulled over to the steps so that the water level would be only up to our chests.

When we opened the front door, a torrent rushed in, drenching toys that were scattered about. Keisha's two kids—8 and 12—were upstairs in a bedroom, while Keisha lay on the sofa screaming, her belly swollen like a big old beach ball, her body wracked with labor pains.

We called up to the kids, "You all right?"

They yelled back, "Yeah, but we scared!"

We told them, "Stay up there. Don't come down here."

There was too much water to get Keisha out through the front. So I said to Calio, "I don't know how to deliver a baby if it comes out. Do you?"

He said no, so I told him, "Then we gotta get Keisha outta here! Do you have some tools we can use to break the roof in?" Helicopters were buzzing overhead like swarms of bees; if we could get on the roof, we could try to get one to help us.

Calio said there were tools, but that they were out back in the shed.

We ran around looking for a way out to the shed.

A door in the kitchen looked like our best option, so we pushed it open and waded through chin-high water. In the shed we found a sledgehammer, crowbar, axe, power drill (though we had no power), and a big, old 24-foot ladder. We grabbed all that stuff and held it over our heads, while battling waves to get back to the house.

The second we got everything inside, we set up the ladder in the middle of the living room.

Then I asked, "Who gonna get up there first?" We just looked at each other. We were all big guys, weighing around 240 pounds, except Calio—he was a slim, little guy.

Finally I said, "I'll get up there." I mounted the ladder with a long crowbar in hand, and then I took a whack at the ceiling. A chunk the size of a toaster crashed to the floor. I felt like I was about to break an Olympic record for banging a roof in.

Keisha was hollering and writhing the whole time, "Help me! Get me outta

here!" The more she hollered, the more it made me move my body, as though it were wild dance music, instead of the piercing screams of a woman thrashing in pain. Caught up in Keisha's agony, I banged harder and harder.

It took the next four hours of us guys taking turns to beat at that ceiling.

In contrast to our hammering, Keisha's crying, and the distant hum of helicopters, the kids were disturbingly quiet. We worried how they were doing, but we didn't want to set them off by asking. We had to keep pounding away.

At last we broke through to a sliver of slate-colored sky. We continued to alternate going up the ladder, while two of us held it below. We threw down dry wall, plywood, insulation, and roof tiles, and the hole grew bigger and bigger.

Finally the opening became large enough for Calio to climb to the top of the ladder, poke his head and arms through the hole, and wave a white sheet; we stood below holding the ladder as tight as we could.

We clung to that ladder, waiting and praying for help to come.

(to be continued)

The Mysterious Masonic Ring

By John "Mick" Matthews, Vendor

Chapter 8: Kittie's Tale (cont'd)

Kittie tells Dickerson about the web of intrigue surrounding the Templar Treasure, one of mankind's most coveted treasures. Dickerson, already well-versed on Templar history, responds sarcastically but fails to get a laugh from Kittie before she continues...

"Yeah, right," she retorted, looking rather unimpressed. "OK... anyway, you know the Templars, or as they were officially known, the Knights of the Temple of Jerusalem, amassed a huge fortune in the banking and money-lending racket during the various crusades."

"Exactly," I responded. "So much so that they were envied by almost every royal court in Europe, because they had found a legal way to circumvent the Church's edicts against money-lending and interest."

"Right," she continued. "As a religious order that held all wealth in common, and not as individuals, the Templars amassed that fortune legitimately because it did not belong to any one man. Their head-

quarters was located atop what was once the temple of Solomon, so it had been thought that all the treasures involved on that might have wound up in Templar hands as well."

"OK, we're covering stuff that's already well known," I said. "Tell me something new."

"We're getting there," she said. "Now tell me what happened to the Templars, oh all-knowing and impatient one."

"King Philip IV of France, who had Pope Clement V in his back pocket, got the aforesaid pontiff to disband the Templars on grounds of heresy after a flood of testimony accusing them of everything from homosexuality to demon worship," I answered. "Thinking he'd get everything by acting as an 'agent of the church' as opposed to using church as an agent of him."

"Ok, great, so what happened to all the money, and the artifacts of the Temple of Solomon?"

"To the best of my knowledge, most of the money, and none of the artifacts, were

ever seen again." I answered. "But according to legend, the Templars got most of their treasure out of France through Spain, and some say it ended up in..."

"Scotland!" she said, finishing my sentence. "Where some say it wound up in the hands of those who carried on the Templar tradition."

"The Masons." I nodded, seeing her logic.

"Good, we're on the same page here," she continued. "The present Masonic tradition, while having its roots dating back

to the same Temple that once housed the Templars, dates back to the early 1600s, only a generation or two away from the fall of the Templar knights."

"In fact, some say the Masons were formed as a cover for the Templars to keep meeting, as well as add new allies to the mix to boot," I stated, adding what I knew of the tale. "Not to mention the Masons weren't bound by a vow of celibacy and could have biological heirs as well as spiritual ones to carry on their works."

(to be continued)



BOARDING-HOUSE BLUES

Billy has settled into the 'Tenderloin' lifestyle, having been introduced to the dancer Elaine by his new 'hustler' buddy, Jed Harris. Now it seems he'll share her lodgings at the Astoria Hotel, which sits above a skin shop run by Cholo and Ferret...

In the muzzy pre-dawn haze of an April morning on F Street, a tumultuous uproar was heard. Down the rattling cast iron stairs of the Ritz Hotel, located in what once was the "Ben Schwartz Building" at Number 920 F, a ragtag band of hoodlums and hustlers clattered towards the thin source of light: cracked double doors, single paned, beneath an ancient transom. Words limned in gold and red, "ROOMS, 2.50 Weekly."

Oddly, that rate still held, some fifty years down the road. Ferret, the ringleader of these questionable, unshaven young dudes, was bellowing off a gin dream from the night before. "Gum tree Bingo, Shades of Blood, Pains of Bones, Rip yer neck open and DRINK YE!!"

Once scattered on the pitted, purple skylit vault sidewalks in front of the gnarly and crumbling Atlantic Building, or "Atlantis," as the denizens referred to it, the mob dispersed to their survival "slaves," or jobs. Ferret ran herky-jerky, half a block ahead of his handler, Cholo.

The two couldn't have been more widely disparate. Cholo was about 5'6", and squat as a toad. Ferret, who liked to call himself 'Apache,' was little more than a



PHOTO BY CHRIS SHAW | 1976

ninety-pound skell. He favored a ripped leather jacket over a T-shirt and moldy-looking jeans. This pair ran the Heaven pornographic bookshop, in the basement of the Astoria rooming house at Fourteenth and H.

At this moment, Billy sat on the edge of the ecdysiast Elaine's swaybacked iron bed, pondering his next move. "Those pancakes were good," he mumbled appreciatively.

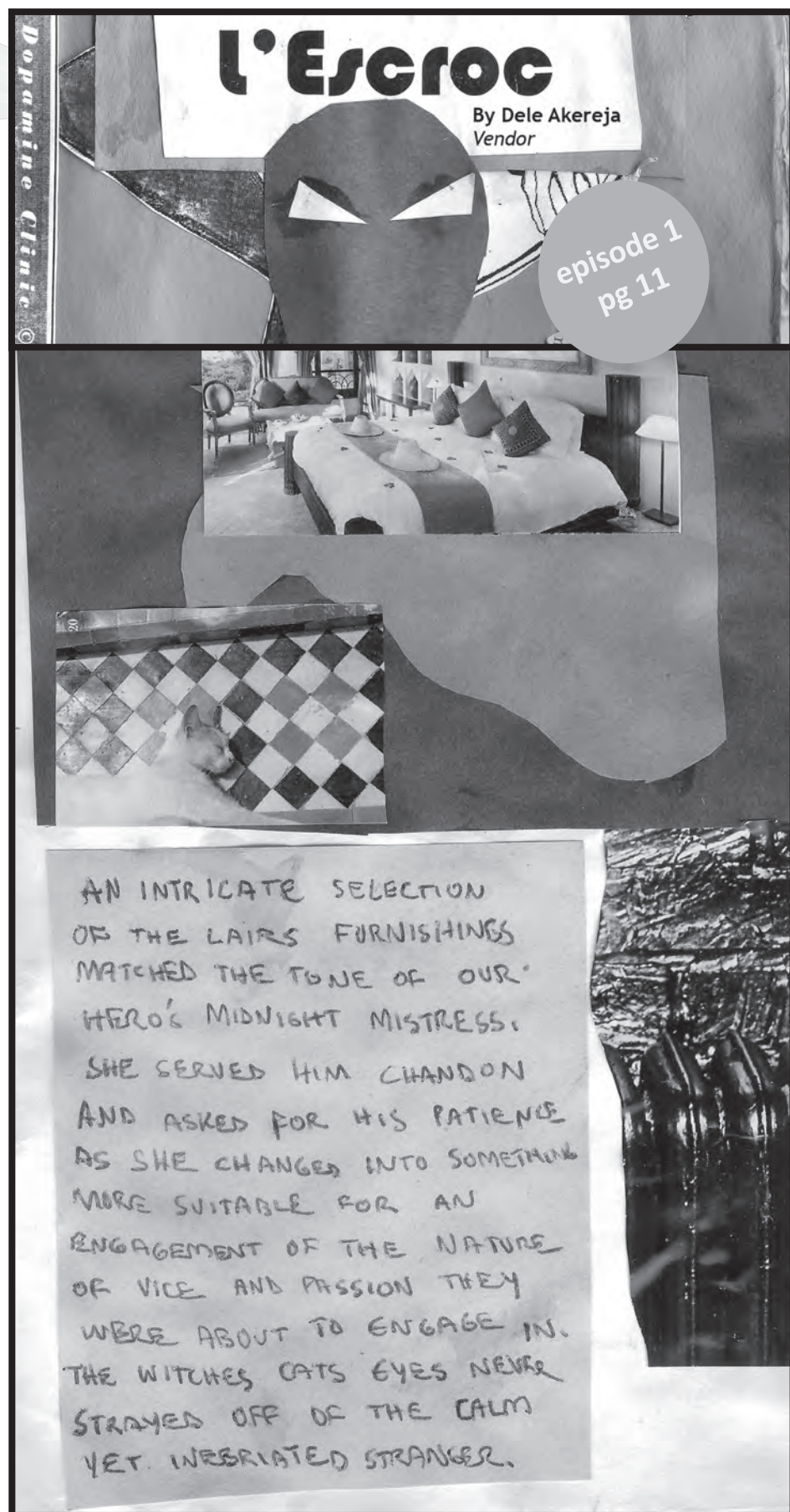
Elaine snickered back, adjusting her nightdress with the baby blue bows. "You ain't no short stack."

Billy attempted a laugh, but fell back. Elaine made her way around to his end, standing over him triumphantly. "Billy, rooms are at a premium, even in this slime hole neighborhood, so I suggest you stay right here. Cholo downstairs, he kin give you a spot humpin' stacks of magazines. So whaddya think?"

Billy gazed up to the cracked and cobweb-bedecked light socket with the dusty 15-watter.

"Guess I'd better settle in, Elaine, you've been kinda nice to me so far..."

(to be continued)



You Never Miss Your Water ‘til Your Well Runs Dry

By Veda Simpson, Vendor



I never knew the real meaning of “you never miss your water ‘til your well runs dry” until recently, when I lost the person that I now know was my best friend... my mother. Out of all my brothers and sisters, I got the most butt whippings, and now I thank her for every single one of them, as they made me who I am today.

Four days after Christmas I received a Christmas card. It wasn’t in her handwriting but I think that though she couldn’t sign it herself, she thought enough to have her nurse’s aide sign it for her and address it to me and her 8 grandchildren cats. It brought joy to my heart and laughter in my life. She looked completely at peace at her funeral with that elephant in her hand. She loved elephants. I really believed she could fly. I believed she could

touch the sky, as she thought about it every day. She spread her wings and when she took her last breath she flew away. I know she is soaring now. God opened the door and she went running through. I believe she can fly, I know that she is flying even now. I want to thank my nephew from the bottom of my heart for the care he gave her until her final day. He didn’t let any pain, harm, or danger come upon even a strand of hair on her head.

M is for the many things she gave me
O means that I owe her all I owe
T is for the tender sweet caring she shared
H is for her heart of purest gold
E is for her eyes, shining like scarlet
R means right, and right she’ll always be

Put them all together and they spell mother, a word that means the world to me!

Open Letter

By Shuhratjon Ahmadjonov, Vendor

Mr. President Barack Obama,
Dear Senators and Representatives!
You created the commission which prepared recommendations on reconnaissance community reform. You intend to decide on new measures for control of intelligence (security) services in January, 2014.

I would like to draw your attention to another important aspect of the activities of intelligence services and law enforcement in the United States.

“Fact: 31,000 people died from gunshot wounds in 2012 - 19,000+ suicides, 11,000+ homicides and 800+ accidents. More children drowned in backyard pools than died from guns.

Fact: 90 percent of all gun deaths involve a handgun. The “official” figures tend to over-count long guns because many death and crime reports do not actually describe the type of weapon.

Fact: 50 percent of gun suicide victims are white males, age 30-50, most legal gun owners. 60 percent of gun homicide victims are African-American males, age 17-30, most shot by other African-American males using illegal guns.”

(SOURCE: <http://bit.ly/1b14EnZ> “Gun Violence: Who’s Killing Whom?” www.dailykos.com ,September 6, 2013)

I believe that one of the most important causes of massacre and suicides is an illegal, brusque collection of information and reintervention in the private life of U.S. citizens by some staff of law enforcement and intelligence services and the related informants and provocateurs. I wrote about this in an article entitled “What causes massacre in the United States?” in Russian and I published it online in April-May 2013.

A Change Has Come

By Larry Garner, Vendor

For so long I felt insignificant and that I didn’t matter.

I learned to feel that way because of all the hard knocks and painful lessons I learned in living life on life’s terms. Through it all, I wore the smile of a clown, smiling on the outside and making others laugh while on the inside I was feeling sad.

Gradually I began to learn to be thankful and seek out the faith that I had as a child, when all the world was so simple. I decided to see myself as God sees me: a son of God created in His image. Now I have a good reason to feel good about myself. To know that I am accepted by God allows me to accept love from others. I will not allow my past mistakes to define my future.

Now I believe that God has a plan and a great destiny for me. It is His will that I share the love

He has shown me with others I meet everyday. Instead of sadness on the inside I have the light of God. Now my desire is to show the good cheer and my little light within with everybody I meet.

It is my joy to encourage those I meet on the street, because you never know if a kind word might inspire someone to keep keeping on and not give up. A smile and a warm word works wonders. So today, when you see me on the street, know that you are not a customer but a friend. As for myself, I am working in my God-given calling: to brighten your day and spread love to you.

Special thanks to my friends at 19th and K st and Eastern Market!

Love you all!
Larry, an ambassador for Christ

Being Half-Vegan

By Dwayne R. Butler, Vendor

Being half vegan is great for people that love meat and can’t give it up completely. The next step is to become vegetarian. I’m half vegan and I find I have more energy and feel stronger, healthier and speedier.

Trying to be 100% vegetarian is a lot of fun: experimenting with different foods to make a vegetarian meal. The different combinations of vegetables are so good! I love the taste of things like spinach, vegetarian ham with fake mayonnaise, or vegetarian bacon. For burger-lovers, I eat Boca burgers and for hot dogs I eat Smart Dogs. Fruit bars and vegan chocolate cake are great for dessert.

Vegetarian food tastes GOOD. It’s much better than I thought it would be. It has opened my eyes to a new world of taste and a new life. I have learned that you can find a lot of protein in vegetables and can gain muscle mass by eating a lot of them every day. Nuts, oats and fruits in the morning; potatoes, nuts and salad for lunch; and vegetarian spaghetti, vegetarian lasagna or Boca burgers for dinner!

Plant foods provide you with nutrients necessary to stay healthy and strong. Meat will give you things you don’t want in your body, like cholesterol and saturated fats and contaminants. So remember, vegetables are the best.

Resolutions to Share

By L. Morrow, Vendor

As we all go into the New Year 2014, let me pass a few resolutions to all of us!

I hope that you will use them and carry them into the future years to come!

These are my three resolutions that I would like to share with everybody.

- #1/ Pray
- #2/ Smile
- #3/ Show some charity to all!

These three resolutions all work together!

1. When you pray, you will always be for yourself
2. When you smile, it keeps you healthy
3. Showing charity to all, will always make you feel good

Remember!
Love God
Love yourself
and always show some love.
God bless everyone!

How I Learned to Walk

By Judson Willisams, Vendor



ILLUSTRATION BY TYLER HARCHERROAD

To quote Bill Cosby, “I started out as a child*”: swimming, doggy paddling, kicking, exploring the boundaries within the transition of this waystation between Bardo states.

Then comes the emergency drill (everyone out of the gene pool!!!). There is a pushing, a pulling, a jostling, a binding, lights, noise ... What happened to the peace and quiet?

Pressure. Awful stink.
“I no like this.”

All of a sudden I feel good, then pain below. I really no like this. Me open mouth, close eyes and YELL. Blind, deaf,

but me no dumb, me YELL!!!
Later: crawling, crawling mistake. YELL! Crawling. crawling mistake. YELL. Crawling, YELL --

[time out for a commercial]
Everyone was crying. The others wearing blue and white were crying. The big container was crying, even the pretty winged thing eating clothes was crying. Even the one they call Mommy was crying.

Container states question, “You ever see a moth bawl?”

Only a mother ... (to be continued)

*Technically I am a potential neonate.

Service Spotlight: Winter Shelter and Warming Services

By Tommy Chalk, Editorial Intern

Mayor Vincent Gray has brought together many resources to ensure the District's homeless population stays warm during a Cold Weather Emergency. The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority will provide buses to keep homeless individuals warm. More information regarding the buses can be found by calling Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency (HSEMA) at (202) 727-6161. If the D.C. government is closed, other public buildings may be closed as well. Hypothermia shelters, including designated recreation centers, may open early. If the government does close due to weather, emergency warming shelters will be open. These shelters include Kennedy Recreation Center, Columbia Heights Recreation Center and Banneker Recreation Center. If someone refuses to go inside, the Department of Behavioral Health and Metropolitan Police Department can use authority under D.C. law to transport homeless individuals who are unable to protect themselves to medical and emergency facilities. A Cold Weather Emergency is called when the temperature












falls or is projected to fall to 15°F or below (including wind chill) or 20°F (including wind chill), and one or more of the following conditions: Precipitation for 60 consecutive minutes, ice storms/freezing rain, snow of at least three inches, winds of more than 10-15 miles per hour, a wind chill below 0°F, and/or other meteorological conditions or threats as determined by HSEMA. To report homeless people exposed to conditions, call 1-800-535-7252, (202) 399-7093, 311, 211, or email uposh@upo.org and tweet @dchypothermia. Include the time when you saw the person, the location, a description of the individual's appearance, and name if known. Pets should be brought indoors during extremely cold weather. To report animal cruelty, call the Washington Humane Society at (202) 723-5730. More information can be found through text alerts, registered through <https://textalert.ema.dc.gov/register.php> or by texting "DC" to 411911, tweets through @DCHypothermia, @DC_HSEMA and @mayorvincegray, and the websites hsema.dc.gov and snow.dc.gov.

STREET SENSE

January 29 - February 11, 2014

COMMUNITY SERVICES

15

 Housing/Shelter	 Clothing
 Outreach	 Transportation
 Education	 Legal Assistance
 Food	 Showers
 Medical/Healthcare	 Laundry
 Employment Assistance	

DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH ACCESS HOTLINE

1-888-7WE HELP (1-888-793-4357)

SHELTER HOTLINE: 1-800-535-7252

Academy of Hope: 269-6623

601 Edgewood St, NE

aohdc.org



Bread for the City:

265-2400 (NW) | 561-8587 (SE)

1525 7th St, NW | 1640 Good Hope Rd, SE

breadforthecity.org



Calvary Women's Services: 678-2341

1217 Good Hope Road, SE

calvaryservices.org



Catholic Charities: 772-4300

catholiccharitiesdc.org/gethelp



Charlie's Place: 232-3066

1830 Connecticut Ave, NW

charliesplacedc.org



Christ House: 328-1100

1717 Columbia Rd, NW

christhouse.org



Church of the Pilgrims: 387-6612

2201 P St, NW

churchofthepilgrims.org/outreach

food (1 - 1:30 on Sundays only)



Community Council for the Homeless

at Friendship Place: 364-1419

4713 Wisconsin Ave, NW

cchfp.org



Community Family Life Services:

347-0511

305 E St, NW

cflsdc.org



Community of Hope: 232-7356

communityofhopedc.org



Covenant House Washington:

610-9600

2001 Mississippi Avenue, SE

covenanthousedc.org



D.C. Coalition for the Homeless:

347-8870

1234 Massachusetts Ave, NW

dccfh.org



Father McKenna Center: 842-1112

19 Eye St, NW

fathermckennacenter.org



Food and Friends: 269-2277

219 Riggs Rd, NE

foodandfriends.org

(home delivery for those suffering from HIV, cancer, etc)



Foundry Methodist Church: 332-4010

1500 16th St, NW

foundrymc.org/ministry-opportunities

ID (FRIDAY 9-12 ONLY)



Georgetown Ministry Center:

338-8301

1041 Wisconsin Ave, NW

georgetownministrycenter.org



Gospel Rescue Ministries: 842-1731

810 5th St, NW

grm.org



Jobs Have Priority: 544-9128

425 Snd St, NW

jobshavepriority.org



John Young Center: 639-8569

119 D Street, NW



Martha's Table: 328-6608

2114 14th St, NW

marthastable.org



Miriam's Kitchen: 452-8926

2401 Virginia Ave, NW

miriamskitchen.org



My Sister's Place:

529-5991 (24-hour hotline)

mysistersplacedc.org



N Street Village: 939-2060

1333 N Street, NW

nstreetvillage.org



New York Ave Shelter: 832-2359

1355-57 New York Ave, NE



Open Door Shelter: 639-8093

425 2nd St, NW

newhopeministriesdc.org/id3.html



Rachel's Women's Center:

682-1005

1222 11th St, NW

rachaels.org



Samaritan Inns: 667-8831

2523 14th St, NW

samaritaninns.org



Samaritan Ministries:

1516 Hamilton Street NW | 722-2280

1345 U Street SE | 889-7702

samaritanministry.org



Sasha Bruce Youthwork: 675-9340

741 8th St, SE

sashabruce.org



So Others Might Eat (SOME)

797-8806

71 O St, NW

some.org



St. Luke's Mission Center: 333-4949

3655 Calvert St. NW

stlukesmissioncenter.org



Thrive DC: 737-9311

1525 Newton St, NW

thrivedc.org



Unity Health Care: 745-4300

3020 14th St, NW

unityhealthcare.org



The Welcome Table: 347-2635

1317 G St, NW

epiphanydc.org/thewelcometable



Whitman-Walker Health

1701 14th St, NW | 745-7000

2301 MLK Jr. Ave, SE | 797-3567

whitman-walker.org



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☐ I want half of my purchase to benefit a vendor directly

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Vendor Badge #

Name

Address

Phone



PHOTO BY DENNIS FORSTER

By Aida Basnight
Vendor

God, The Creator, or whoever is your Power that is greater than yourself is so good! In my last article back in December of 2013, I wrote a "Dear Santa" letter asking for a job. Santa came through as always

and it was up to me to put on my interview clothing, make sure that my resume was in perfect tip-top shape with no errors in it, that I made it on time for the interview, that I was able to make eye contact, and

I Hate to Say Goodbye, But.....

answer and listen to the questions that my interviewer asked from me.

I have to share how God is good in my understanding and how he has a plan for all of his children no matter what age we are on his journey of our lives. One of my customers, Mr. Richard Peterson on 14th and K Street, would sometimes buy the paper from me or another vendor named Marcus who happens to be at the same corner. Well, Mr. Peterson read my "Dear Santa" article, and three days later he saw me on my corner and he asked me if I was willing to take an entry-level position. I told him sure, that I needed a job. Mr. Peterson asked me if I was going to be at my corner for another 10 minutes. I told him I would be here for a while selling *Street Sense* newspapers. Mr. Peterson came back within 10 minutes and handed me two business cards with his name on one and a woman named Connie Woodland on the other for Capital Area Assets Builders (CAAB). Mr. Peterson asked me if I could make it to an interview with Ms. Woodland on December 23rd at noon, and to call him if I couldn't. But he didn't have to worry. No way I would miss that!

I made it to my interview on time and met with Connie. She brought us both a Subway sandwich and a bag of chips. Ms. Woodland and I sat in a medium-size conference room. She started eating her sandwich and said I could also eat mine. But I told her I was so excited and nervous that I couldn't think about eating anything. All the while I was thinking to myself, 'maybe I should force myself to eat the sandwich that she was so nice to buy for me. I hope I don't insult her and ruin my chances of getting hired for the position.' Ms. Woodland asked me a few questions, gave me a full description of the job and its requirements, and told me what kind of organization they were.

Suddenly she looked at my resume and asked if this was my actual address. I said yes. I live within walking distance. One of my angels had me drop the "N Street Village" name—the property managers where I live. Connie then asked me whether I knew an Evelyn. I told her yes. She's the property manager of my building. Talk about a small world! But, I still say it's God's plan for me.

After the interview was over, I went back to my apartment and changed into my *Street Sense* selling clothes. As I was going out of the front door I ran into Evelyn. I started to ask her whether she knew Connie Woodland, but Evelyn beat me to the punch. She told me Connie called to ask her whether she knew me. Evelyn said Connie was so impressed with me that I needed to "claim that position." I told her immediately I would.

Then, Brandon Caudill, *Street Sense*'s vendor manager, told me Capital Area Assets Builders has volunteered its services and helped a few vendors before. I said to myself 'how is it I've never heard of Capital Area Assets Builders? Is it the best kept secret in the city?

A whole week went by after the interview with Connie Woodland. Then Ms.

Woodland called to tell me I could report to work on Jan. 6, at 9:00 a.m.

I started dancing and thanking Jesus and God all at once for giving me a thousand second chances. I also want to give a thank you to Santa - Mr. Rich Petersen, Executive Director of CAAB - who read my article and decided to give me an interview with his organization. I also want to give a thank you to Connie Woodland, Chief Administrative Officer and Director of Matched Saving Program of CAAB. Even though Mr. Petersen is her boss and he set up this interview, it was Connie's decision whether or not to hire me.

I work 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. My position is Office Manager, which means I can't continue to sell *Street Sense* on weekdays. But I may start selling on weekends once the weather breaks. I have learned not to say never ever again.

A whole week went by after the interview with Connie Woodland. Then Ms. Woodland called to tell me I could report to work on Jan. 6, at 9:00 a.m... My position is Office Manager...

When I started working *Street Sense*, I was told it was not a career, but it would improve my economic status as an individual. I have done this through the help of God. I have written numerous articles that have affected me and others, whether they were homeless or not. I've done what I am supposed to do, but I do know my journey has not yet ended because I know that God has a plan for me and everyone else He has created.

CAAB is a great resource for low to moderate income families who want to finish their education, be first-time home buyers or go into business for themselves. CAAB gives money to individuals who want to improve their livelihood. I have always wanted to go into business for myself, and working for CAAB I can do that by going to their classes about finance. Once I do everything I am supposed to do at CAAB, they will match my savings.

I want to give thanks to *Street Sense* and all the wonderful vendors, volunteers and staff. I've worked there for three years, and I worked alongside some awesome people. Without *Street Sense* I don't know where I would be today. Thank you again! I also want to thank all my customers for their prayers and for being loyal in buying the paper from me. It's not like I won't see my customers again because a plethora of my customers work in the same area as I do now. So when the weather breaks, I am sure I will be seeing you during lunchtime.

Thanks again, everyone.
Aida Basnight

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Street Sense
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